

VLR 3/16/15  
NRHP 5/26/15

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Graham's Forge Mill  
other names/site number 098-0052

#### 2. Location

street & number Route 629 not for publication  
city or town Max Meadows vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Wythe code 197 Zip

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*M. Catherine Hansen* 4/11/2005  
Signature of certifying official Date  
**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:      removed from the National Register  
     entered in the National Register      other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
     See continuation sheet.  
     determined eligible for the National Register Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
     See continuation sheet. Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
     determined not eligible for the National Register



**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation  stone \_\_\_\_\_  
roof  metal \_\_\_\_\_  
walls  wood \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_  
Industry, Engineering \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance ca.1890-1934

Significant Dates ca.1890  
1934

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 3.87

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 17 510141 4088256 2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**II. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Michael J. Pulice, Architectural Historian, Kimberly Bowen, Graduate Intern

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Roanoke Regional Office date January, 2005

street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave. SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name William Decker

street & number 101 Ridgewood Rd. telephone 423-968-9596

city or town Bristol state TN zip code 37620

Additional Contact: James W. Cook, 1026 Morehead Lane, Pulaski, VA 24301

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   7   Page   1  

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### Summary Description

Graham's Forge Mill is located on Reed Creek, in the eastern portion of rural Wythe County, Virginia. The c.1890 frame mill structure is rectangular in plan and consists of five stories with a cupola on the top. There is a ca. 1910-20 shed addition on the south elevation, an office addition from around the same time on the north elevation, and an early small covered porch on the front (east) elevation. Around the mill are a number of contributing resources including a smokehouse with oven/kettle used for hog scalding, corncrib, grain storage facility, oven/kettle remains, and mill dam. The one non-contributing building is a workshop.

### Site

The mill property is located west of the intersection of Route 619 and Route 629 and just north east of the Route 629 bridge over Reed Creek. The mill is located in a large field inside a meander on Reed Creek, approximately 200 feet north of Route 629. Topographic maps indicate that the mill sits within a flood plain. There is a wooded area between the mill and the creek that was not present in 1950s photographs.

Outside of the nominated parcel, beginning just south of the workshop, sits the ca.1860-70 Graham and Robinson store, an attractive and well-preserved brick structure with a full-length porch across its front (west) elevation, and windows on both sides. Across Rt. 629 from the mill property and the store is the early-20<sup>th</sup>-century, frame, Gothic-styled Graham's Forge Methodist Church. West of the church is a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century frame I-house. The John W. Robinson House (DHR # 098-5040) is located 3/10 of a mile south of the mill, well beyond the church, via a private road. It is a mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, two-story, Y-plan Greek Revival/ Italianate brick structure with porches on three sides. The house is complimented by period outbuildings and breathtaking surroundings. The ca. 1840 Major David Graham House (DHR# 098-0008) is located a short distance further down Reed Creek.

### Architectural Description

#### Mill Exterior:

The foundation of the mill is constructed of dry-laid, roughly-cut, coursed limestone. The foundation on the rear (west) and north side of the mill is about 9 feet tall. The rear elevation of the mill faces Reed Creek, although the mill wheel, now missing, was located on the north side.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   7   Page   2  

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Above the stone foundation the structure is wood frame with weatherboard cladding. The roof is covered with standing seam sheet metal. The one-story shed roof office addition is built on stone piers. The one-story addition on the south elevation is constructed of frame, sheathed with board-and-batten and a hipped roof covered with v-crimped sheet metal. A conveyer system runs from front of the mill to the grain and storage facility, 34 feet to the east.

There are three doors that span the front of the mill: the original double door centered on the front of the mill, another door entering into the south addition, and a door to the office addition at the north end of the covered porch. All doors throughout the mill are treated with ramped, pediment-like surrounds.

There are a total of twenty-nine windows on the mill, including single one-over-one double-hung windows on each side of the cupola. On the front elevation there are four two-over-two double-hung windows. On the western elevation of the mill there are two dormers with two-over-two double-hung windows, six additional two-over-two double-hung windows, and two small double-pane fixed sash windows. The dormers and windows are all symmetrically aligned. The eastern elevation of the building has seven two-over-two double-hung windows. The windows are arranged in three rows of vertically aligned two-over-two windows. The rear elevation of the mill has four two-over-two double-hung windows. Like the door surrounds, all of the windows exhibit the same ramped, pediment-like surrounds.

On the gable ends of the dormers and cupola is a star motif with faded red paint. The height of the building is extended by an additional monitor story built on the flat deck roof of the fourth story. The monitor has a simple gable roof with a cupola on top. The cupola has a cross-gable roof with a finial, decorative cresting on the ridges, and a late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Victorian-styled lightning rod.

The main roof has eaves extending out approximately two feet. On the front gable end of the monitor story, a stenciled sign appears on flush boards, which is now faded and only partially readable. Above the sign is a frieze made up of raised panels within contiguous recessed panels. The recessed areas are painted a contrasting lighter color than the framing, though all of the paint has faded with time.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   7   Page   3  

---

Interior:

The mill's first floor consists of an open room with rail-less open stringer of stairs in the back of the room. To the north is a door leading into the office. The second floor is also an open room with open stringer stair at the rear. Along the side walls are grain bins and chutes, and assorted milling machinery. This arrangement continues on each floor until the fifth floor, which is long and narrow. Throughout the mill's interior are wide, unfinished pine floorboards and exposed framing with heavy, diagonally-braced corner posts. There are heavy support beams running through the center of the structure, undergirding the floor joists. The floor joists also have diagonal cross-bracing between them. The interior walls of the south addition are lined with shelves. The office addition has unfinished wood floors and a wood stove.

Associated Resources

Four other structures, lined up in a row, are located approximately across from the front of the mill. Directly across (34 feet east) from the mill is the grain and storage facility. The frame building, 37 feet wide and 40 feet long, is sheathed with board-and-batten and has a front-gabled, standing-seam metal roof with a seven-bay louvered monitor, small, four-sided, louvered cupola and a Victorian-styled lightning rod. The grain and storage facility includes several floors of bins and shoots like the mill, along with machinery. A sign found in the grain and storage facility reads, "INVINCIBLE" Dustless Milling Separator manufactured by the invincible grain cleaner company Silver Creek, NY." The farthest structure to the north is the "smokehouse," constructed of balloon framing covered with vertical boards and a sheet metal roof. It is 14 feet wide and 16 feet long. Located inside of the smokehouse is a large kettle used for hog scalding. Several feet west of the smokehouse are the identical contents of no longer extant structure, including the kettle, with its oven-like fuel chamber with a 2-foot-wide opening below, and a squat brick chimney. The base of the oven/kettle structure is 7 feet by 10 ½ feet. South of this structure is a frame double-pen corncrib, 24 feet by 40 feet, with a gable roof covering both pens and the 10-foot-wide breezeway in the center. Finally, the workshop sits east of the grain and storage facility. The workshop is of vertical board construction with a metal shed roof. It is 130 feet long by 48 feet wide, and has 11-foot-wide opening for tractors and other heavy equipment on the north elevation. This cheaply constructed building is in terminal condition and is expected to be taken down in the near future. It is therefore considered *non-contributing*. However, the substantial remains of the milldam spanning Reed Creek appear to be permanent enough, and certainly warrant further study in order to determined how and when the dam was built. The dam is therefore considered a *contributing structure* for the purposes of this nomination. Most of what can be seen of the dam above water is constructed of concrete.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   8   Page   4  

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## 8. Statement of Significance

The Grahams Forge Mill is one of the outstanding late-nineteenth-century architectural gems of southwestern Virginia. Although utilitarian in function, it is nevertheless a stunning site of rustic beauty – a five story building with stone foundation, fading whitewash and weathered gray wood exterior; fading silver paint on the old tin roof slowly succumbing to rust; original windows and doors with stylish surrounds, proportionally correct dormers that compliment its appearance; paneled frieze below broad eaves, and wonderful little cupola with star motif and decorative cresting. The mill and its compliment of ancillaries possess almost complete architectural integrity, and many of the mill workings remain in place inside the structures. The present mill occupies the site of the former Graham's Forge with its furnace, iron rolling mill and nail factory, and the earlier Crockett Forge, which was established in 1796. The site is named for David Graham, who acquired the forge in 1826 and later left it to his son, Major David P. Graham.

### Applicable Criteria

The Grahams Forge Mill and immediate surroundings are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry because of its importance to Wythe County's economy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and its excellent representation of a relatively large-scale milling operation in rural southwestern Virginia. The site is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for the unusually high artistic values, its exemplification of period construction techniques; and the fine collection of structures associated with it, including the remains of the historic mill dam, as well as a preserved smokehouse and corncrib. The period of significance begins with the mill's construction in c.1890, and ends in 1934, when the mill ceased to operate commercially.

### History of Graham's Forge Mill

Graham's Forge and an iron rolling mill, and a nail factory were built about 1828 and were rebuilt in 1856 with four refinery fires, and one hammer worked by water. That year it produced 161 tons of blooms and 23 tons of bar iron. The rolling mills and nail works reportedly had three heating furnaces, four trains of rolls, five nail machines and one hammer. The exact construction date of the first grist mill is not known, however it can be concluded that it was erected as early as the iron works, as a grist mill would be a necessary adjunct to an extensive operation of this type.<sup>1</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   8   Page   5  

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James and Andrew Crockett were brothers who were among the earliest iron industry entrepreneurs in Wythe County.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1790's they purchased about 1,200 acres of land that extended from Reed Creek to Cedar Run in the vicinity of the present Graham's Forge area. In 1796 they had land surveyed on both sides of Reed Creek. Records show the Crockett ironworks in operation as early as 1796.<sup>3</sup> A Wythe County Land Book entry dated November 2, 1801, shows that Andrew and James Crockett acquired ten acres of land on both sides of Reed Creek to include their iron works. In 1805, they received permission to build a dam across the creek and build a forge. Today, the circa 1890 mill stands near the forge site, reportedly on the site of the old iron rolling mill. Graham's Forge is said to have been located several yards down on the same side of the creek as the mill.<sup>4</sup>

After David Graham (1800-1870) purchased the property in 1830, the forge became known as Graham's Forge. Graham acquired much of the land in the Graham's Forge area, and soon became the "iron master of the county." The Graham family continued the manufacturing of iron products in Wythe County for the next 75 years.<sup>5</sup> David Graham married Martha Pierce of Poplar Camp in 1835, and by 1850 Graham's real estate, totaling 5000 acres of improved land and 1,944 acres of unimproved land, was valued at \$70,000. He owned 29 slaves at that time. Graham's business consisted of iron manufacturing, the production of castings and bar iron, and a nail factory. He employed over 130 employees with labor costs averaging over \$1600 a month. Production consisted of 650 tons of pig iron, 80 tons of castings, 170 tons of bar iron and 80 tons of nails.<sup>6</sup>

In 1860, David Graham's personal property was appraised at \$55,800 and in 1863 he paid tax on 6,907 acres of land. At this time he was employing 50 men and his monthly labor costs totaled \$800. Production in 1860 had dropped to only 100 tons of bar iron, 160 tons of pig iron, 20 tons of nails, 350 tons of pig metal and 50 tons of castings.<sup>7</sup> During the Civil War, Graham Furnace was one of three furnaces in Wythe County providing iron for the Confederacy. They also mined iron ore for shipment to Richmond.<sup>8</sup>

David Graham's son, David Pierce Graham (1838-1898), was known as Squire Graham and later Major Graham. He was commissioned captain in the 51<sup>st</sup> Virginia infantry in 1861. He fought for the Confederacy for three years, saw action in five major battles, and was promoted to the rank of major before being discharged for health reasons in 1864. Upon his return home from the war, he and his father continued to support the war effort by manufacturing "gun metal of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section   8   Page   6  

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highest property" and shipping it to Tredegar Ironworks in Richmond.<sup>9</sup>

Major Graham's sister Elizabeth married John W. Robinson (b. 8/6/1837). After David Sr.'s death in 1870, Major Graham and Robinson became business partners who carried on and largely rebuilt their mining and manufacturing enterprises. These enterprises included the development of natural resources, farming, a sawmill and a flourmill. The market for iron, however, soon declined dramatically. By 1881, Graham & Robinson operated the only forge in Wythe County.<sup>10</sup>

The extant frame flourmill was erected 1889-90, followed shortly by construction of the existing smokehouse, and the grain and storage facility. The forge operated until 1916, when it was reportedly washed away by a flood. Iron products made at Graham's Furnace in later years included: oven lids, spider lids, camp kettles, flatirons, andirons, pots, back plates, stove plates, kettles, iron water pipes, stoves, hobble weights, iron rails, giant kettles, miniature lard lamps, small ovens and lids, nails, as well as pillars. The flourmill served farmers and rural customers in eastern Wythe County by producing high quality wheat flour and cornmeal for several decades. It remained in operation until 1934.<sup>11</sup>

The third owner of the Graham's Forge Mill property was magnate George L. Carter of Hillsville, who made his fortune in mining. He acquired the property and began making improvements in Max Meadows in the 1930's. One of his many projects was the straightening of Reed Creek. Carter leased many acres of land in the Max Meadows area and improved the value of his property. When he died his son released all the land in the area back to their original owners.<sup>12</sup>

#### NOTES

1. W.R. Chitwood M.D., "Mills-Barrett's Mill/Graham's Forge Part 2." Wythe County Historical Review, 222-255.
2. James S. Presgraves, *Wythe County Chapters*. Wytheville, VA: James S. Presgraves, 1972, 105.
3. Mary B. Kegley, *Glimpses of Wythe County, Virginia Vol. 2*. Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1986, 55.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section 8, 9 Page 7

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4. W.R. Chitwood M.D., *Grain Mills and Iron Furnaces in Wythe County*. Wythe County Historical Review No. 10 January 1976, 2.
5. Kegley, 137-139.
6. 1850 U.S. Agricultural Census
7. 1860 U.S. Agricultural Census
8. "Major David Graham House" National Register nomination, Virginia Landmarks Commission, 1984.
9. Kegley, 137-139.
10. "Major David Graham House."
11. Kegley, 137-139.
12. Kegley, 137-139.

### 9. Bibliography

Chitwood, W.R. M.D. "Mills-Barrett's Mill/Graham's Forge Part 2." Wythe County Historical Review, 222-255.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Grain Mills and Iron Furnaces in Wythe County*. Wythe County Historical Review No. 10 January, 1976.

Kegley, Mary B. *Glimpses of Wythe County, Virginia Vol. 2*. Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1986.

Presgraves, James S. *Wythe County Chapters*. Wytheville, VA: James S. Presgraves, 1972

1850, 1860 U.S. Agricultural Census for Wythe County.

"Major David Graham House" National Register nomination, Virginia Landmarks Commission, 1984.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

Section 10, photo Page 8

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## 10. Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The 3.87-acre nominated parcel is bounded by Reed Creek to the north and west, Route 629 to the south, and an adjacent parcel to the east. Its boundary is the same as parcel 45-5-22 as shown on the Wythe County real estate tax map.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes all surviving resources associated with Grahams Forge Mill's historic period of significance. The remaining acreage that was once part of the Forge/Mill property is now divided into neighboring parcels and are held by separate owners.

### Photographs

All photographs are of:  
Graham's Forge Mill Property and historically associated resources  
Wythe County, Virginia  
Date: October 2004 Photographer: Michael J. Pulice

1. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill context, facing north. Negative #: 21835. Frame #23.
2. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, south elevation. Negative #: 21835. Frame #8
3. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, cupola. Negative #: 21835. Frame #6
4. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, north elevation. Negative #: 21835. Frame #21
5. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, east gable end. Negative #: 21835. Frame #4
6. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor interior. Negative # 21834. Frame #17
7. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, 5<sup>th</sup> floor. interior. Negative # 21834. Frame #37

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Graham's Forge Mill  
Wythe County, Virginia

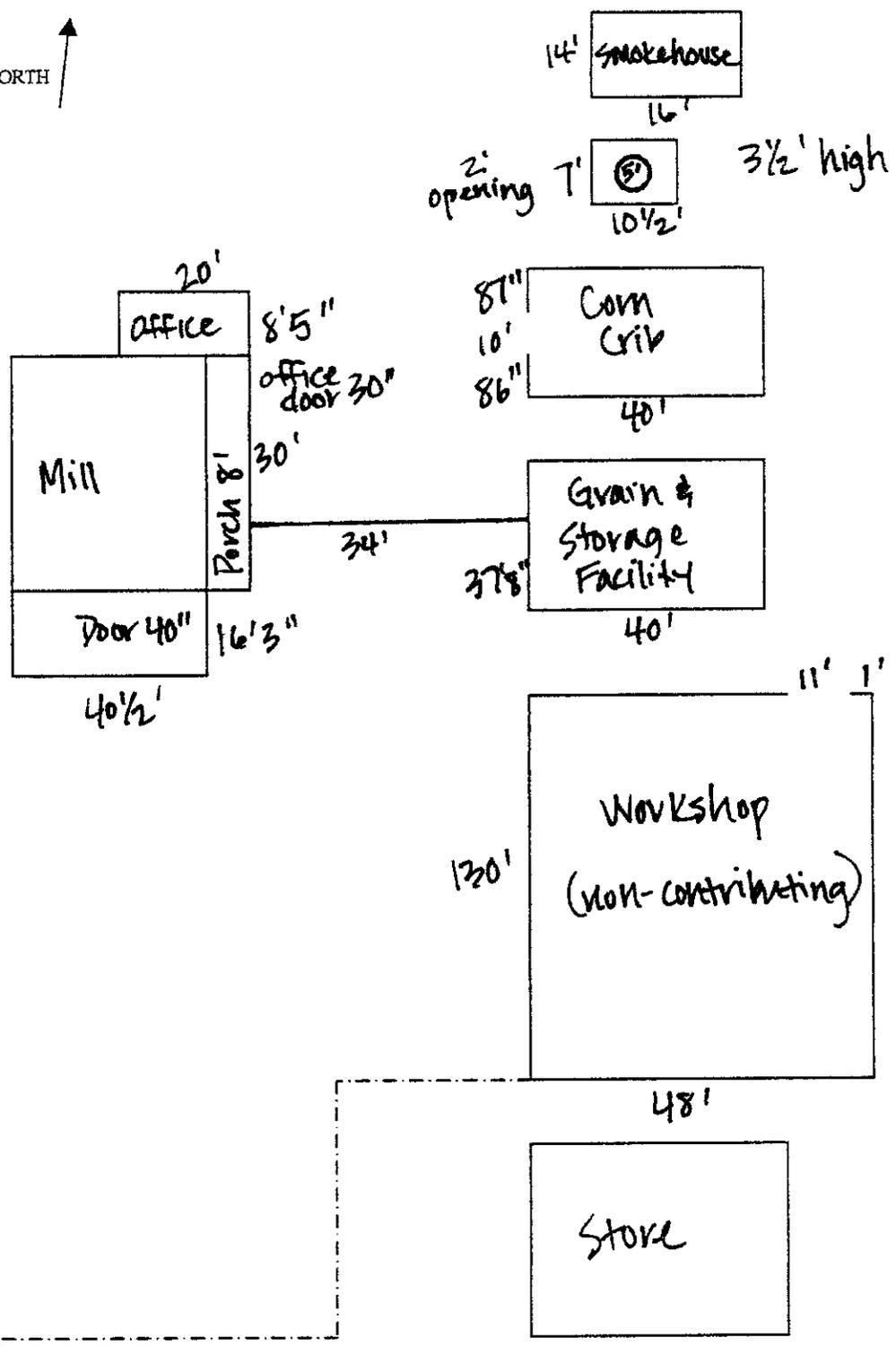
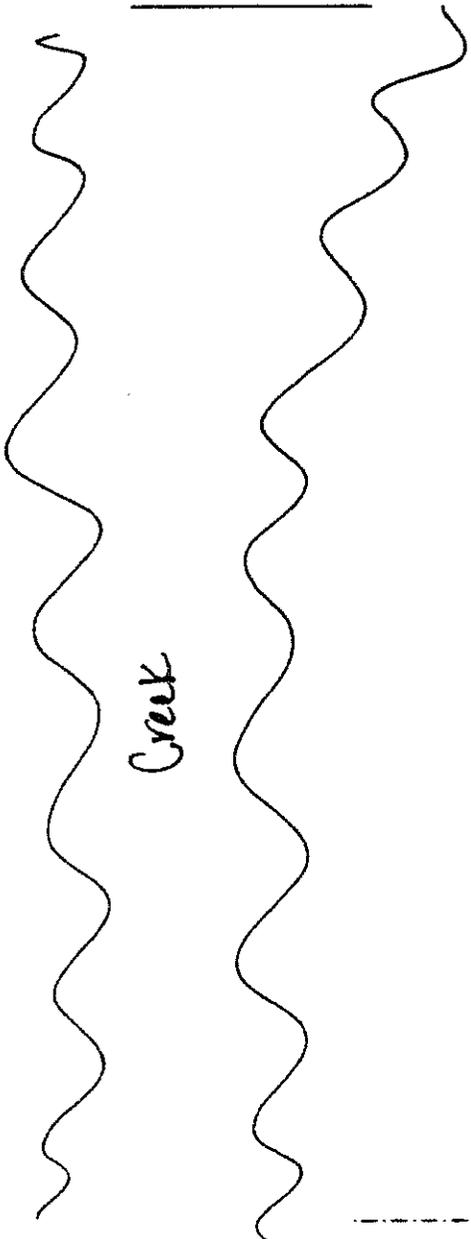
Section photo, continued Page 9

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8. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, 4<sup>th</sup> floor interior. Negative # 21834. Frame #26
9. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill, 4<sup>th</sup> interior. Negative # 21834. Frame #27
10. VIEW OF: Grain/storage facility, facing north. Negative #: 21835. Frame #9
11. VIEW OF: Grain and storage facility, interior. Negative # 21834. Frame #34
12. VIEW OF: Grain/storage facility and corn crib, facing south. Negative #: 21835. Frame #19
13. VIEW OF: Corn crib, facing north. Negative #: 21835. Frame #12
14. VIEW OF: Smokehouse and oven/kettle, facing west. Negative #: 21835. Frame #18
15. VIEW OF: Graham's Forge Mill dam, facing west. Negative #: 21834. Frame #33

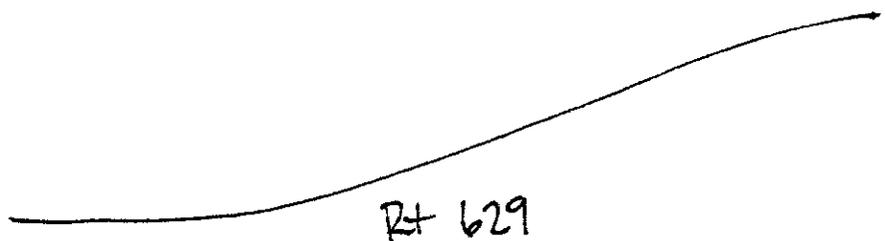


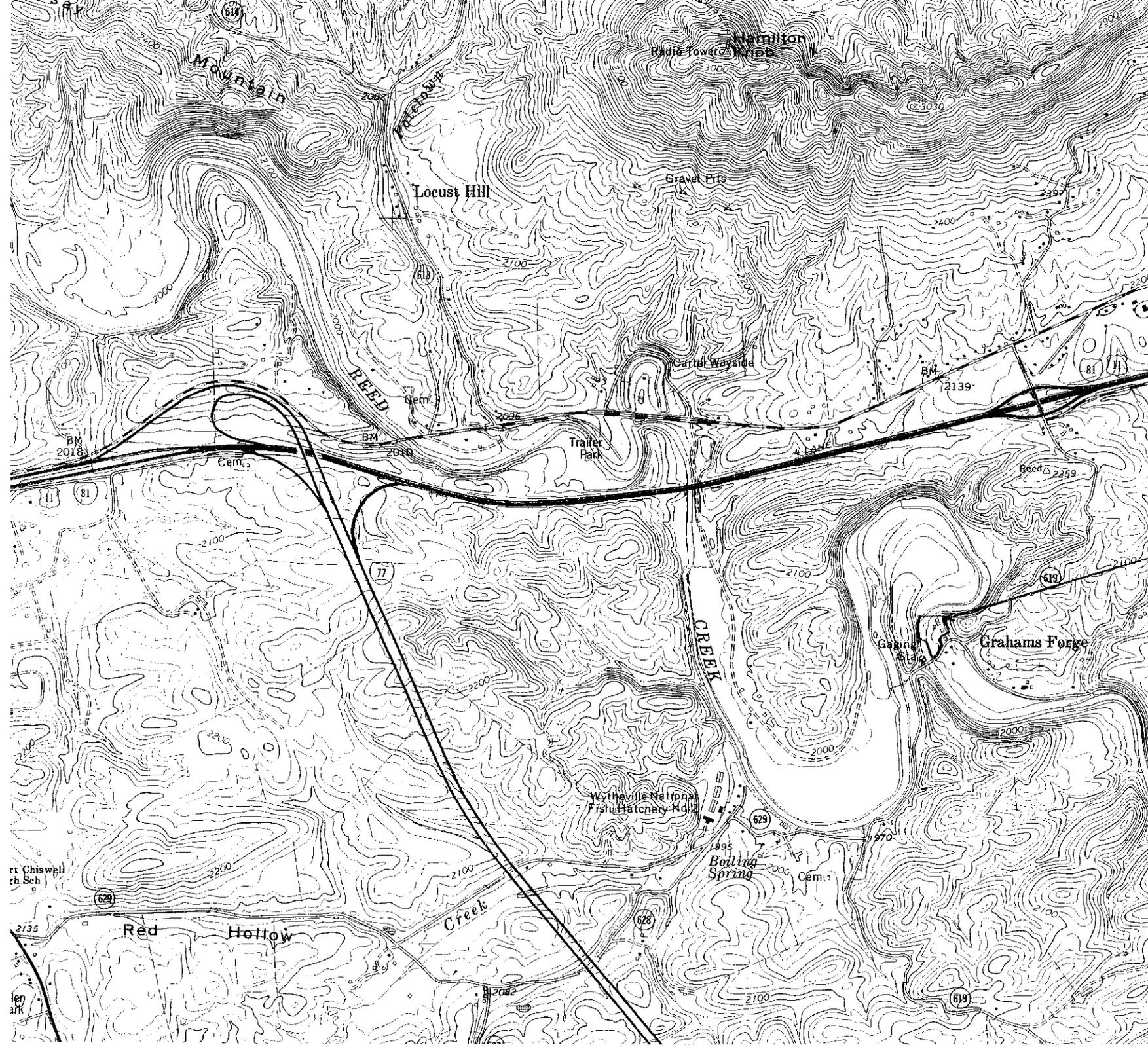
DAM



**Graham's Forge Mill**  
 Wythe County, Virginia  
 2004 DHR ID 098-0052

Drawing not to scale





4091  
57'30"  
4090  
6 MI. TO VA. 100  
NEWBURN 1.4 MI.

Grahams Forge Mill  
17/510141/4088256

(FOSTERS FALLS)  
4857 IV NE  
4087